

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument was officially designated on January 17, 2001, by Presidential Proclamation 7394. Section 2 of the Antiquities Act of 1906 (Title 34 U.S. Statutes, Section 225; Title 16 U.S. Code, Chapter 431) authorizes the President, at his or her discretion, to declare national monuments by public proclamation. These are usually historic landmarks, historical and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historical and scientific interest that exist on lands owned and controlled by the U.S. Government.

Before this area was made a national monument, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had administratively designated it as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) through the *Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan* (RMP—1986, maintained and reprinted 1992). An ACEC requires special management attention to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historical, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources; or other natural systems or processes on the public lands. The Tent Rocks ACEC was designated to protect the unique volcanic formations that give the area its name. Comparable formations are found only in surrounding areas of New Mexico and in Turkey.

Management emphasis for this area has been on interpreting its geologic and scenic values while allowing semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation. Since the area was designated an ACEC, BLM protective measures, management actions, and Cooperative Management Agreements (in 1997 and 2000) and Resolutions (2004) with the Pueblo de Cochiti have helped

preserve it for use and enjoyment by the public and educational institutions. Through the *Protection Plan for Tent Rocks ACEC* (1987), the BLM developed management prescriptions to maintain the geologic, scenic, recreational, and natural components of the ACEC, which has now been proclaimed a national monument.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT AND PLANNING AREA

Location and Acreage

Located in north-central New Mexico in the foothills of the Jemez Mountains on the Pajarito Plateau, the Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks (KKTR) National Monument is situated in Sandoval County about 5 miles west of the Rio Grande. It lies about 35 miles southwest of Santa Fe and 52 miles northeast of Albuquerque (refer to Maps 1 and 2). Access to the area from these cities is by State Road (SR) 22 or SR 16 from Interstate Highway 25 (I-25), then by Tribal Route 92 which connects with BLM Road 1011 (also designated as Forest Service Road 266). Adjacent to the monument are the Pueblo de Cochiti on the east and south, Santo Domingo Pueblo on the south and west, Jemez Pueblo and the Santa Fe National Forest on the west, and private lands to the north. The monument is located within New Mexico's Congressional District 3.

The Pueblo de Cochiti serves as the gateway community to the monument. Tribal officials and members work with the BLM to manage and maintain the site to ensure visitor safety and enjoyment, resource protection, and preservation of the tranquility and traditions of the pueblo.

Within the monument boundary are approximately 5,402 acres. The BLM manages 4,124 federal surface acres and 4,565 acres of minerals, the State of New Mexico owns approximately 521 acres (surface and minerals), and the balance of monument acreage (approximately 757 surface acres and 316 acres of minerals) is privately owned (refer to Map 3). In this plan, this 5,402-acre area is also referred to as the “Decision Area.”

Adjoining the monument are two parcels of private land that have resource values similar to those of the monument. To the southwest is a parcel containing approximately 965 acres, while along the northern boundary is a parcel known as the Cañada de Cochiti Grant (or Young Ranch) that contains approximately 9,268 acres. The University of New Mexico (UNM) holds title to the Cañada de Cochiti.

Proclamation 7394 included only the minimum acreages necessary to protect the values for which the monument was established. However, based on the analysis carried out for this plan, BLM Planning Team members feel these adjacent lands could be managed for similar values. Therefore, the team is suggesting that if owners are willing to sell, these private lands be acquired and included in the monument or managed similarly. A formal inclusion of these lands would require legislation by the Congress.

This plan/impact analysis is written specifically to include decisions for the monument portion of the Decision Area that fall under the BLM’s management authority. Also included are some management recommendations that would apply in the expanded area, if it was acquired. Together with the Decision Area, this expanded area is referred to as the “Planning Area.” The impact analysis for the Planning Area is less specific than that for the federal portion of the Decision Area because BLM access to the nonfederal areas for data collection has been limited.

[Note: As the result of minor boundary discrepancies, the figures in Table 1-1 below

show some slight differences between the recorded legal acreages for the monument and Planning Area, and the acreages calculated using the BLM’s Geographic Information System (GIS, which allows production of maps and analysis based on computerized satellite data). Because the acreage differences are small and the time and cost to adjust them is uncertain, the BLM Planning Team has elected to show the differences here while using the GIS figures throughout the analysis. These differences are not large enough to change the outcome of the analysis.]

Natural and Cultural Resources and Uses

Kasha-Katuwe means “white cliffs” in the traditional Cochiti Keresan language of the Pueblo de Cochiti. Elevation of the monument ranges from 5,570 feet to 6,760 feet above sea level. The light-colored, cone-shaped tent rock formations are the products of volcanic eruptions from the Valles Caldera (one of the largest volcanic craters in the world) and the Jemez Mountains that occurred 6 to 7 million years ago. These eruptions left deposits of pumice and “tuff” (compacted ash and dust) that are over 1,000 feet thick. Over the last million years the tents have been created by a combination of running water, wind, and mass wasting (the movement of materials down the slope by creep and rockslide). The erosion has cut away at the softer pumice and tuff, creating tent shapes with a broad base tapering to a point capped by resistant volcanic rock.

With its unique features, this area provides a remarkable outdoor laboratory for teaching students and other interested people about geologic processes. In addition to being a valued research site, the monument is a favorite location for field trips of University of New Mexico students in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences as well as other universities, schools and organizations. Recreational use of public lands in the Planning Area is concentrated primarily around the main cluster of tent rock formations and adjoining canyons (refer to Map 3). Daytime uses such as hiking, sightseeing,

Insert Map 1 (regional map)

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Insert Map 2 (NM & surrounding area)

Map 2 – blank back page

Map 3 (Decision Area/Planning Area/acreages)
11 x 17 size – foldout

Map 3 continued 11 x 17

picnicking, photography, and education are common. [Note: The area is closed to camping through supplementary rules published in the *Federal Register* (61 FR 92: 21479-483; May 10, 1996).] The season of use is year-round, with the peak months being April through November. Recreational facilities have been provided near the tent rock formations for resource protection and user convenience.

The monument supports a variety of vegetation. The area contains a population of pointleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pungens*), a shrubby species known primarily from the Sierra Madre of Mexico. This population site is one of the northernmost in the United States, containing this unique species that has adapted to the cooler

and moister weather of northern New Mexico (Knight 1983).

Existing data suggest that a full array of cultural resources may be present within the Planning Area. These range from early prehistoric to historic, and include areas with socio-cultural values. The most common cultural resources are attributable to prehistoric Pueblo, modern Pueblo and historic Hispanic use of the area.

Within the monument, two operators lease two grazing allotments for their livestock. The Peralta Allotment (#123) lease is for approximately 2,008 acres, while the Tent Rocks Allotment (#122) lease is for approximately 2,080 acres of the federal lands within the monument.

TABLE 1-1
ACRES IN THE DECISION AREA AND PLANNING AREA

Area & Ownership	Legal Acres	GIS Acres	Difference	
			No. of Acres	% of Legal Acres
Decision Area—Total	5,395	5,402	7	+00.17
<u>Surface</u>				
Federal	4,114	4,124	10	+00.24
State	521	521	0	0
Private (Total)	760	757	-3	-00.39
<u>Minerals</u>				
Federal	4,554	4,565	11	+00.24
State	521	521	0	0
Private (Total)	320	316	-4	-01.25
Edgeholdings Desirable for Acquisition—Total	10,351	10,233	-118	-01.14
<u>Surface</u>				
Private—Cañada de Cochiti	9,388	9,268	-120	-01.28
Private—Southwest parcel	963	965	2	+00.21
<u>Minerals</u>				
Private (except gold, silver & quicksilver /mercury, which are federal)	9,388	9,268	-120	-01.28
Planning Area—Total	15,746	15,635	-111	-00.70

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

Presidential Proclamation 7394 designated the KKTR National Monument to protect cultural and biological objects of interest and to provide an opportunity for visitors to observe, study, and experience the unique geologic processes found in the area. The proclamation requires the BLM to prepare a management plan for this monument, which is considered to be a unit of the agency's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). Another requirement is that the BLM work closely with the Pueblo de Cochiti to implement the purposes of the proclamation.

Under the BLM's current planning policy, the agency must prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the monument that is separate from any other plan (a "stand-alone plan"). Policy further requires that the RMP be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The EIS will disclose to the public and BLM managers any impacts to the environment that would likely result from implementing the agency's Proposed Action or possible alternatives. The decisions made through this planning process will apply only to federal lands administered by the BLM within the monument, and to inholdings identified in the proclamation for acquisition, if and when they are acquired.

PLANNING ISSUES

The following are issues or areas of concern for the KKTR National Monument. These were presented to the public during the scoping period; no other issues were raised at that time.

Issues are considered the "drivers" of a management plan; that is, they are areas of conflict or controversy between uses and management activities for a given area of public land that must be resolved in the plan. Because Proclamation 7394 set limits on how the monument is to be managed, and the area is small compared to most other units within the National Landscape Conservation System,

conflicts among resource uses that need to be resolved are not evident. However, the BLM addresses these areas of concern in this plan and continues to refer to them as "issues." The agency also addresses other basic environmental and management concerns to provide comprehensive management guidance for all resources within the monument and to satisfy legal requirements.

1. **Land tenure adjustment** and how land ownership will be incorporated into the management plan of the monument.

Within the boundary of the monument are 521 acres of state land and 757 acres of private land. Other parcels of private land adjoin the boundary of the national monument.

2. How **access and transportation** will be managed in the monument.

The proclamation directs that the BLM, through this management plan, consider road closures or travel restrictions to protect the objects of interest in the monument.

3. How **recreational activities** and visitor use will be managed.

Recreational use of the monument has been increasing over the past few years. The BLM has provided additional facilities and upgrades for visitor use and enjoyment; health and safety; and resource protection.

4. How **ecosystem restoration** will benefit the public and the monument.

Oneseed juniper trees are encroaching into the grasslands and shrublands of the monument. The woodlands and forest stands are overstocked, need thinning, and are being affected by drought conditions and beetle attacks.

5. How **American Indian uses and traditional cultural practices** will be incorporated into the management of the monument.

The monument is adjacent to lands owned by several Indian pueblos and has special meaning to local American Indians.

PLANNING CRITERIA

In addition to the planning considerations of Proclamation 7394 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the BLM planning regulations (at Title 43, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1610) require preparation of planning criteria to guide development of all resource management plans. Planning criteria ensure that BLM plans are tailored to the identified issues and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. These criteria are based on applicable law, agency guidance, public comment, and coordination with other federal, state, local and American Indian tribal governments.

The planning criteria used in developing this management plan for the Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument are listed below.

- The BLM is completing the plan in compliance with FLPMA and all other applicable laws. To protect the objects of geological, cultural and biological interest in the monument, the plan also must meet the requirements of Proclamation 7394.
- The BLM's Planning Team is consulting with the Pueblo de Cochiti and other tribal governments, the State of New Mexico, county and municipal governments, other federal agencies, and all other interest groups, agencies and individuals.
- The plan establishes the guidance upon which the BLM will rely in managing the monument.
- The plan includes an environmental impact statement (EIS) based on NEPA standards.
- The plan provides opportunities to study, observe, and experience the geologic processes as well as other cultural and biological objects of interest within the monument.

- Consistent with Proclamation 7394, the plan sets forth a framework for managing recreational activities and experiences.
- Livestock grazing management is prescribed by laws and regulations, but is excluded from within the monument unless it advances the purposes of the proclamation. Through the plan, the BLM is determining if and how grazing would serve this function.
- The BLM recognizes the lifestyles of area residents in the plan.
- Through the plan, the BLM recognizes the State of New Mexico's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife, including hunting within the monument.
- As part of the plan, the BLM is considering acquisition of state and private inholdings within the monument and private lands adjacent to the monument.
- The plan alternatives address transportation, vehicular and other types of access.

RELATIONSHIP OF THIS PLAN TO OTHER PLANS

Relationship to BLM Plans

The BLM makes three primary levels of land use planning decisions: the RMP level, the activity level, and the site-specific level. One RMP-level plan and two activity-level plans provide current guidance for managing the KKTR National Monument: (1) the *Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan* (1986, maintained and reprinted 1992; amended), (2) the *Albuquerque Field Office Fire Management Plan* (2004), and (3) the *Protection Plan for the Tent Rocks ACEC* (1987). [Note: The Rio Puerco RMP includes land use decisions for approximately 900,000 surface acres of public land, including the area that was called the "Tent Rocks ACEC" as of 1986.]

This stand-alone RMP for the national monument focuses mainly on broad resource objectives and direction, but also provides some activity-level guidance and site-specific decisions. Decisions from the three land use

documents mentioned above are incorporated into Alternative A, Continuation of Existing Management. Once approved, this stand-alone RMP will replace these plans for lands within the monument.

Relationship to Other Agencies' Plans

BLM planning regulations require RMPs to be consistent with officially approved resource-related plans of other federal agencies, state and local governments and American Indian tribes, so long as these plans are also consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of the federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. This RMP is consistent with the following officially approved, resource-related plans of other federal agencies, state and local governments.

- The *Sandoval County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance*, which applies to private inholdings within the monument.
- The *Master Plan, Design Memorandum No. 13—Cochiti Lake, Rio Grande, New Mexico*. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District, prepared this plan in 1973 in cooperation with the Pueblo de Cochiti. The lake lies a few miles east of the monument (refer to Map 2).
- The *Santa Fe National Forest Plan* (USDA, FS 1987), which applies to lands near the northern and western boundaries of the monument.
- The National Park Service's *Business Plan* for the nearby Bandelier National Monument (USDI, NPS 2001).